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MONTANA LETTER

October 17, 1973

1973 REAP WORK MAY BEGIN

The weather doesn't look too promising, as this is written, but we know that it will change and there'll be beautiful days yet this fall when REAP cost-sharing work can be done. But all counties haven't had money enough to approve the requests made. That's why, last week, we authorized early approval of 1973 cost-sharing work.

We've also given each county a fiscal authorization representing a part of the money they'll have to encourage conservation and environmental improvement work next year.

All this is pretty fast considering that the 1973 national REAP program was announced on September 29. It means, of course, that we haven't had opportunity yet to develop our next year's State and county REAP programs.

So early approvals for next year will be based on this year's cost-share rates and practice specifications for 1972 high-priority practices.

These high-priority practices include seeding of grasses and legumes for permanent vegetative cover; cross-fencing to better distribute livestock

and improve ranges; reservoirs to conserve and better utilize water; construction of diversion terraces, ditches and dikes to utilize water effectively and limit soil erosion; storage and diversion facilities for animal wastes.

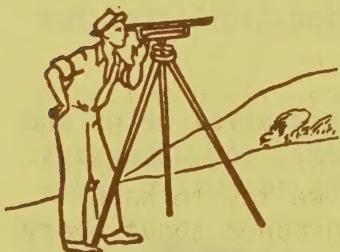
Also, structures to control water and limit sediment runoff; sod waterways and similar measures to retard sedi-



It was my pleasure recently to present pins and Certificates of Service to district directors Fred Allen (center) and Carl Wohlgemant (right) recognizing their years of Federal service. Fred's award is for 25 years, nearly all as a district director with ASCS. Carl's award is for 20 years, including service as a district director and as executive director of the Custer County office.

ment and chemical runoff; planting vegetation to stabilize sources of sediment, and disposal of woodland residues without burning.

By authorizing county committees to issue cost-share approvals now for practices under next year's program, they will be able to fill many requests which could not be granted otherwise either because of lack of money or because the farmer had already earned his cost-share allowance for 1972. Later, if some producers who have 1972 approvals don't earn the money set aside for them, 1973 approvals can be transferred back to utilize the 1972 funds, provided the producer has not already earned his allowance for this year.



Early approval will also allow farmers and ranchers to

take advantage of those good days and weeks we're going to have and get a head start on their conservation work. Fall is the ideal time to complete many practices because land and ditches are not being used for crop production.

Meanwhile, State and county program development groups will be pressing ahead with preparation of the 1973 programs. They will emphasize cost-sharing practices to solve in the public interest conservation and environmental problems which are related to farming operations.

The highest priority will go to practices which will prevent or reduce the movement of sediment or animal wastes into lakes, ponds or streams. A new practice to help accomplish this objective will offer cost-sharing for the installation of excess water management systems where they are needed to combat adverse environmental conditions such as water pollution from contaminated water runoff caused by high water

table or incomplete recycling of animal or human waste, and salinity, or alkalinity.

The other new practice included in next year's national program is disposal pits for solid wastes. We have had this practice in Montana on a pilot basis for the past three years.

Next year's national program is funded initially for \$140 million, including \$3,607,000 for Montana. The final program level will not be known until determinations are made on overall Federal spending. This year's program also started at \$140 million and was increased to \$195.5 million by Secretary Butz early last January. He said the increase was made to respond to the willingness of farmers and ranchers to match or exceed the additional investment in soil and water conservation, and pollution prevention and abatement practices.

GRAIN SALE BENEFITS CITED

The sale of U.S. grains to the Soviet Union is the outstanding accomplishment of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the past four years, Frank G. McKnight, associate general sales manager for USDA's Export Marketing Service, declared recently.

Speaking to State ASC committeemen and district directors from Western States at a recent meeting in Sacramento, McKnight said, "During the almost four years in which I have been associated with the Department of Agriculture, I can think of nothing the Department has accomplished that has done more for the farmers and the businessmen and the taxpayers of this country, as well as for our international relationships".

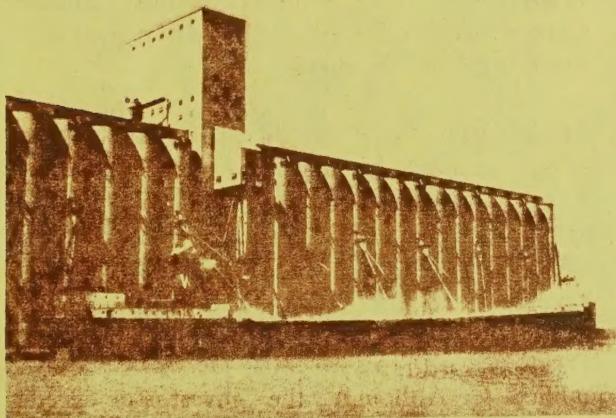
McKnight then pointed out six areas in which he feels the recent sales transaction have been beneficial. These, he said, are:

"First, the Russian sales have increased the farm value of farmers' crops this year by nearly \$1 billion. The greater part of that is the rise in wheat prices, but corn and soybean values have been strengthened, too.

"Second, the sale to Russia has reduced the total stocks of grain in the country from what were threatening to become burdensome levels, without reducing them below adequate levels.

"Third, the sales to Russia have cut the cost of the farm program to taxpayers by increasing the value of government-owned grain, cutting storage costs, and reducing payments under the set-aside program both this year and perhaps next year, as well. In contrast, the cost of the wheat in a loaf of bread has risen by only about one-half cent.

"Fourth, the sales were conducted by the U.S. private trade in the best American tradition.



"Fifth, the sales were made in free and fair competition with other exporters through the use of export payments that have been used in our wheat program ever since 1949.

"Sixth, the credit portion of the transaction was made on the basis of our regular CCC three-year credit terms at 6-1/8 percent interest which we grant

to our regular customers, rather than on the much softer terms which the Soviets originally proposed."

McKnight predicted that sales of U.S. wheat to the Soviets this year will be about 400 million bushels, more than any country ever bought from us in a marketing year previously. He estimated total agricultural purchases from us by Russia this year at between \$900 million and \$1 billion.

NEW PHOTOS DUE IN 13 COUNTIES

Aerial photos--the source of our photocopies which make it possible for producers to certify compliance with set-aside programs--must be updated constantly for maximum usefulness. Generally, we try to have each county photographed about every eight to ten years, but the interval varies depending on new land breaking, highway construction, changes in field boundaries, new irrigation developments, and similar circumstances which tend to make photos outdated.

This year a total of 10,817 square miles is under contract for photographing. This includes all or parts of Beaverhead, Broadwater, Jefferson, Lake, Madison, Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli and Sanders in Western Montana, and Fergus and Yellowstone. In addition, the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in Blaine and Phillips is being flown under a cooperative agreement with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. BIA will reimburse us for the cost of the flight and we'll provide the pictures.

The arrangement will be mutually advantageous since we'll update our pictures and BIA will get quality photography, both at less cost than would have been the case for either agency alone.

Along this same line, we're also getting photography from the U.S. Air

Force for part of Broadwater and Gallatin and Meagher counties. This will be from a 1971 flight. This will give us an opportunity to determine if we can utilize existing coverage from another Federal source thereby saving the expense of a reflight.

When our contractor completes his flights, the film is sent to the ASCS Aerial Photo

Lab at Salt Lake City. Quality checks are made by the Lab, and then enlargements are made to scale for county offices.

After the photos are received in county offices -- this should be around the first of the year for this year's flight -- farm

or tract boundaries will be outlined, fields numbered and acreages computed and recorded on the photo. They are then sent to the State office for mechanical photocopying and reproduction of copies for producers.

CROP SURVEY UNDER WAY

The Montana Crop and Livestock Reporting Service will conduct its annual end-of-the-season crop survey starting in mid-October according to information received from Daniel L. Herbert, state statistician.

Questionnaires asking for information on acreage and production of crops in 1972 are being mailed to a random sample of about one-half of the State's farm and ranch operators. Producers who receive the questionnaires are urged to fill them out accurately and return them promptly in order to assure that a truly representative sampling is obtained.

The results of this survey will be used to develop county, state and national statistics for the 1972 crop year. Composite statistics will be published for use by producers, agribusiness, and others. Copies of the report will be sent to all who respond to the survey. Accurate information on state and national production, land utilization, etc., is of major importance to those engaged in the marketing of farm products.

Herbert emphasized that individual information obtained from the survey is kept strictly confidential and that no person or Governmental agency is allowed access to the individual reports.

AFLATOXIN TREATMENT DEVELOPED

Aflatoxin, a mold produced chemical which causes cancer in susceptible animals, may be rendered harmless by a treatment developed by USDA's Agricultural Research Service. The treatment uses ammonia under pressures up to 50 pounds per square inch for 30 minutes.

Aflatoxin is a chemical sometimes produced by the mold *Aspergillus flavus*. ARS tests show the treatment with ammonia under pressure can effectively inactivate the toxic chemical in cottonseed and peanut meals. The chemical tests need to be tested yet in long-term feeding trials.

All meals treated had seven or fewer parts of aflatoxin per billion parts of meals, significantly below the guidelines of U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

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